



News Release

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Comment Period on Trans-Alaska Pipeline Right-of-Way EIS Remains 45-days

Anchorage . . . Wednesday, July 31, 2002 - The Bureau of Land Management today confirmed the original 45-day schedule for review of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) on renewing the right-of-way for the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System (TAPS). A number of environmental and Alaska Native groups earlier requested that the comment period be extended.

In announcing the decision to maintain the original review schedule, which ends August 20, BLM Director Kathleen Clarke said, "I acknowledge that the DEIS is a lengthy document and that the public has a keen interest in the safe operation of the TAPS and renewal of the right-of-way. However, an extension of the comment period is unnecessary for a right-of-way renewal situation where the existing system has been in place and fully operational for 25 years. This is not a new construction project with alternate routes and major new impacts."

BLM and the State of Alaska have closely cooperated in the preparation of the DEIS, a public disclosure document that describes current TAPS operation and assesses the impacts of renewing or not renewing the Federal Grant of right-of-way for up to 30 years. The DEIS was released to the public on July 5. The six pipeline owner companies filed for a 30-year renewal on May 2, 2001.

BLM-Alaska State Director Henri Bisson noted that BLM has provided a very open and easily accessible public involvement process throughout, including:

- Providing a broad range of opportunities and methods for submitting comments and communicating, including the internet, e-mail, toll-free phones and faxes, and numerous meetings with the interested publics.
- Taking special steps to involve 21 affected Alaska Native Tribes, under the Government-to-Government Executive Order.
- Maintaining constant public access to the right-of-way renewal process through the EIS website, a separate JPO website and EIS newsletters.
- Providing early information to the public via website on hearings dates, locations and times as well as notification of the actual comment period itself.
- Publishing weekly updates on renewal through the widely distributed JPO Weekly Report.
- Actually meeting the planned and repeatedly publicly-stated publication date for the DEIS.
- Ensuring that the DEIS is well indexed, user friendly and easily searchable for topics of particular interest to people who want to comment.

The public is invited to comment via internet: **tapseis.anl.gov** or via toll-free phone at **1-866-542-5903** or toll-free **FAX 1-866-542-5909**, or by mail:

BLM TAPS Renewal DEIS
ANL, EAD/900
9700 South Cass Avenue
Argonne IL 60439

or via hand delivery to the Joint Pipeline Office, 411 W. 4th Avenue, Suite 2, Anchorage

All comments must be received or postmarked by August 20, 2002.

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